

ERIC Document Resume		See Instruction Sheet		DATE OF RESUME 8/17/65	DATE RECEIVED
A. PUBLICATION DATA					
1. ERIC NUMBER ED001427		2. ORIGINATOR CONTROL NO(S). N.A.		3. IDENTIFICATION NO. N.A.	
4. AUTHOR(S): Moore, J.W.				DO NOT WRITE IN SPACE BELOW	
5. TITLE OF DOCUMENT ABSTRACTED: School to Employment Program (STEP)				MICROFILM COPY AVAILABLE YES ☒ NO ☐	
6. PUBLICATION TITLE: School to Employment Program (STEP)				COPYRIGHT GRANTED YES ☐ NO ☒	
7. EDITOR(S): N.A.				COPYRIGHT RELEASE FILED YES ☐ NO ☐	
9. PUBLISHER OR SOURCE Univ. of the State of New York, State Edu. Dept., Bureau of Guidance, Albany				TYPE OF REPORT PROPOSAL ☐ IN-PROGRESS ☒ FINAL ☐ FOLLOW-UP ☐	
10. VOL. N.A.		11. PAGES N.A.		12. MO./YR. 4/63	
13. TOTAL PP. 4		8. PLACE OF ORIGIN The University of the State of New York State Education Dept. Bureau of Guidance Albany, New York		OTHER ERIC REFERENCES:	
		INST/LOC CODE		ERIC SATELLITE CODE	
B. INDEXING DATA					
14. SUBJECT AREA			15. TYPE OF ENDEAVOR report		
16. INDEXING TERMS (6-12)					
work-study		youth employment		cultural deprived	
potential dropouts		student orientation		vocational education	
guidance counseling		student motivation		STEP	
17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)					
The purpose of the program is to reduce the number of unemployed school dropouts through efforts with potential dropouts, 15 years of age and older, while they are still in school. The efforts are designed to enable students to return successfully to the normal school program and graduate, or to obtain satisfactory full-time employment if they should leave school. STEP students attend school in the morning and are employed in supervised work in the afternoon. In addition to the required orientation classes the students pursue classes in the regular curriculum. The majority of all job placements is made in situations under the jurisdiction of local boards of education. Only 2% of STEP group dropped completely out of the school program. Another 7% were guided to full-time employment and 5% returned to the normal school program. The rest of the students are still involved in STEP work-study program after the first year.					
ERIC No.					
18. SOURCE OF ABSTRACT					
C. FUNDING DATA					
19. SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION			20. DIVISION OR DEPT.		21. CONTRACT NO.
			22. TOTAL COST OF PROJECT		PROJECT NO.
			23. DURATION OR PROJECT		U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Office of Education

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THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
The State Education Department
Bureau of Guidance
Albany

SCHOOL TO EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM
(STEP)

STEP was conceived by representatives of the New York State Education Department, the New York State Division for Youth and the Governor's Office as a possible solution to the problem of widespread unemployment among school dropouts. STEP is coordinated by the Bureau of Guidance of the State Education Department. The goal of the program is the reduction of the number of unemployed school dropouts through efforts with potential school dropouts, 15 years of age and older, while they are still in school. These efforts are designed to enable students to return successfully to the normal school program and graduate, or to obtain satisfactory full-time employment, should they leave school. The program combines work experience and daily orientation sessions, both under the supervision of the same teacher-coordinator. It is expected that the opportunity to become familiar with the demands of the working world and to explore appropriate adjustments to these demands under the tutelage of a trained coordinator, will develop in these students, the habits, attitudes, and skills necessary to success in school and on the job.

STEP students most often attend school in the morning and are employed in the afternoon. In addition to the required daily orientation class, pupils pursue other classes appropriate to their ability and needs in the regular school curriculum in the morning hours.

Because of the difficulty in obtaining private work experience placements for potential school dropouts, stipends or "workships" are paid students from school district funds for employment in tax supported agencies. Work for private employers is not so reimbursed, but is paid by the private employer. STEP students are not employed except in accordance with the New York State Labor Law.

The 1962 Legislature amended the Education Law (Article 93, Section 4608) to permit school districts to establish school to employment programs. The amendment was subsequently approved by the Governor. In January of 1963, the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education governing STEP were approved by the Board of Regents (Article 25, Section 191).

The Regulations detail important program elements. They are reproduced below:

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"191 SCHOOL TO EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

1. ESTABLISHMENT.

The Board of Education of any school district may, with the approval of the Commissioner of Education, establish school to employment programs for students who have been identified as potential school dropouts. Such programs shall be a part-time school, part-time employment nature.

2. PURPOSE.

The purpose of such a program shall be the assistance of students in improving their capacity to perform successfully as full-time employees, if they leave school, or as full-time students if they elect to return to the normal school program.

3. NATURE OF REQUIRED STUDY PROGRAM.

a. Students shall meet at least one period each school day with a qualified instructor to consider topics designed to facilitate adjustment to school and employment.

b. For the remainder of the school day, students shall be enrolled in those classes of academic, special and vocational instruction appropriate to their individual needs, interests and abilities.

c. Necessary and proper counseling services, psychological services, remedial services and other school services necessary to the progress of the individual student, shall be provided by the participating school district.

4. NATURE OF REQUIRED WORK PROGRAM.

a. Such program shall be in the nature of part-time employment.

b. Such program shall provide for (a) a maximum of three hours of participation in the work program per day or twenty-three hours per week that school is in session, in the case of those participating students fifteen years of age, (b) a maximum of four hours of participation in the work program per day or twenty-eight hours per week that school is in session, in the case of those participating students sixteen years of age or older.

c. Students shall be placed either with public agencies, or with private employers in accordance with the Education Law and the provisions of these regulations.

(1) Students shall not be placed in employment situations unless covered with a policy of Workmen's Compensation Insurance.

(2) Students shall be placed only with employers who provide the necessary supervision of the students and who provide working conditions conducive to the success of the program, to be determined by the school district, with the approval of the Commissioner of Education.

a. All participating students must obtain employment certificates.

b. No participating student under the age of sixteen years shall be placed in an employment situation in a factory room.

c. All places in which students participating in such a program are placed in an employment situation shall be so constructed, equipped, arranged, operated and conducted so as to provide reasonable and adequate protection to the lives, health and safety of all such participating students. It shall be determined by the participating school district, subject to the approval of the Commissioner of Education, that such places meet said qualifications herein.

5. STUDENT QUALIFICATIONS.

a. Students in the program shall be at least fifteen years of age.

b. Students in the program must have been identified, as potential school dropouts.

6. TEACHER-COORDINATOR.

a. The school district shall assign a licensed teacher, properly qualified, to instruct the students in the program so as to assist their orientation to school and employment, to supervise their school and work experience, to promote their progress within the program and to coordinate the total program.

7. ADVISORY COUNCIL.

a. The school district shall establish an Advisory Council composed of qualified representatives of groups such as labor, business, industry, boards of education, civil service commissions, city and county governments, social agencies, state agencies, and service clubs.

b. Such Council shall serve for the purpose of guiding and advising the school district in the development of its program and in evaluating its progress."

Any district may establish a school to employment program subject to the approval of the Commissioner. However, to encourage districts to undertake such projects, the Legislature in 1962 and again in 1963 made an appropriation of funds, which the Department distributes, on a matching basis, to districts submitting approvable proposals for STEP programs, within the limits of the appropriation. In 1961-62, units were developed in New York, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Ithaca, Albany, and Yonkers. In 1962-63, Poughkeepsie, Kingston, Watertown, and Greece also established programs. Since Syracuse does not now have an active unit, a total of 10 districts presently have operating programs.

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Although, to our knowledge, only in New York State is there such a state-wide work-study program for potential school dropouts, the Education Department has for some years administered cooperative programs in business and distributive education and in technical education. STEP differs from these in that STEP students may be 15 years rather than 16 years of age upon entry, and in that STEP does not seek to develop a specific vocational skill as those programs do, but rather a revised attitude toward school and work. STEP is similar to the Department's General Work Experience Program in this lack of vocational focus, but different in that STEP students must be systematically identified as potential dropouts, whereas General Work Experience Programs may include all types of students.

An extensive annual report of STEP for 1961-2 was prepared for limited distribution and discussion. Copies of this report may be read at the Bureau of Guidance office. The following paragraphs describe some of our observations of the development of STEP in participating cities in 1961-62. In none of these cities was STEP in operation for the full school year.

In the selection of potential dropouts as STEP program candidates, local districts made use of the predictive techniques developed in the Holding Power Project conducted by the Bureau of Guidance between 1954 and 1960. A study of the characteristics of STEP students revealed that their median age upon entering was 15½ years. Their median measured scholastic ability fell in the slow learner range (89 I.Q.) At the end of the year, it was reported that 54% of the program students were successful in all of their subjects as contrasted with 28% of similar students in control groups in each city. The attendance of the control group was a little less regular than that of the experimental group. The percent of attendance earned by the program group was, in turn, slightly less than that of students generally in New York State. Teacher-coordinators had an average of three contacts with parents of their students during the portion of the 1961-62 school year in which STEP was operative.

The majority of all placements for work experience were made in situations under the jurisdiction of local boards of education. About 25% were in other public agencies, and the remainder, in private employment. Of these placements, 40% were in clerical positions, 28%, in custodial and maintenance work, 23%, as general helpers, and 9%, in food service. It should be noted that the Bureau of Guidance prefers private, public agency, and board of education placements in that order.

The content of the orientation sessions varied from district to district, but, upon analysis, it was found that all included some version of these topics: (1) introduction to the program, (2) personal requirements for success in school and on the job, (3) career planning, (4) the young worker, and (5) school and work. Field trips, speakers, the use of films and filmstrips, and cooperation with local offices of the New York State Employment Service were featured in the programs.

It was encouraging to discover that only 2% of the STEP group completely severed their school connections, while active in STEP. Another 7% were guided successfully to full-time employment and 5% to an effective return to the normal school program. In the control group, 15% of the students did become dropouts. Since more than three quarters of the students in both the experimental and the control groups were still in school at the end of the first (incomplete) year of operation, these results must be cautiously interpreted. When these figures are revised in the summer of 1963 based on our 1962-63 experience, a better evaluation of the program's impact will be possible.